

# HEALTH

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## What is Gout?

Gout is one of the most painful rheumatic diseases. It results from deposits of needle-like crystals of uric acid in the connective tissue, joint spaces or both. These deposits lead to inflammatory arthritis, which causes swelling, redness, heat, pain and stiffness in joints. Gout accounts for about 5 percent of all cases of arthritis. For many people gout initially affects the joints in the big toe, a condition called podagra. Sometime during the course of the disease, gout will affect the big toe in about 75 percent of patients. Gout can also affect the instep, ankles, heels, knees, wrists, fingers, and elbows.

### Who Is Likely To Develop Gout?

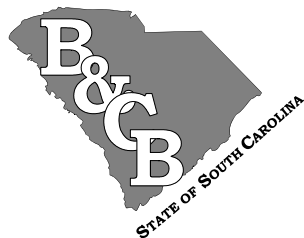
Gout occurs in approximately 275 out of every 100,000 people. Men are more likely to develop gout than women, and men aged 40 to 50 are most commonly affected. Women rarely develop gout before menopause. The disease affects men and women differently. Men tend to develop gout at an earlier age than women, and alcohol is more often associated with the development of the disease in men. Gout is rare in children and young adults.

### Signs and Symptoms of Gout

- Hyperuricemia
- Presence of uric acid crystals in joint fluid
- More than one attack of acute arthritis
- Arthritis that develops in 1 day
- Attack of arthritis in only one joint, usually the toe, ankle, or knee
- A painful joint that is swollen, red, and warm

### What Can People With Gout Do To Stay Healthy?

- To help prevent future attacks, take the medicines your doctor prescribes. Carefully follow instructions about how much medicine to take and when to take it. Acute gout is best treated when symptoms first occur.
- Tell your doctor about all the medicines and vitamins you take. He or she can tell you if any of them increase your risk of hyperuricemia.
- Plan follow-up visits with your doctor to evaluate your progress.
- Maintain a healthy, balanced diet; avoid foods that are high in purines; and drink plenty of fluids, especially water. Fluids help remove uric acid from the body.
- Exercise regularly and maintain a healthy body weight. Lose weight if you are overweight.



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